

Set down young feller

No. 8 ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one) PUB. Living Lore in New England (Connecticut) TITLE Connecticut Clockmaker [(Botsford?)] WRITER Frances Donovan DATE 2/16/39 WDS. PP. 5 CHECKER DATE SOURCE GIVEN (?) Interview COMMENTS

W15120 "Living Lore in N.E." Series Francis Donovan Thomaston, Conn. Feb. 16, 1939. "Set down young feller while I stir up the fire," says Mr. Botsford. The temperature has risen only slightly since this morning, and a bitter wind tears at the branches of the old elm trees outside the house, but in the little kitchen the lids of the "Glenwood range" glow redly and it is comfortably warm. It would seem the fire does not need "stirring," but Mr. Botsford likes it hot. He settles back in his Morris chair, lights his pipe and exhales a cloud of smoke.

"I was listenin' to short wave on the radio before you come in," he says. "I can get a lot o' them European stations and a lot of amachours. I heard them broadcast the Pope's funeral Tuesday. I think it was Tuesday. Of course that wasn't short wave.

"The young feller gave a wonderful description of it. Described the different caskets, and the ceremony, and all, and told about them lowering the body into the mausoleum. You know when they was digging for that tomb they found ruins of something else, went way back to the time of the Roman Emperors.

"Ain't it wonderful to think how civilizations is founded on the ruins of them that went before. They buried a lot of coins, and documents and so forth with the Pope, so's if he's ever dug up they'll be able to tell somethin' about his times.

"Look it over in Egypt. I was reading about the pyramids, and the Sphinx, in the Sunday paper. Boy, now that was a wonderful 2 piece of work, that pyramid buildin', and don't you think it wasn't. They can tell time by the shadows that the pyramids cast. They can figure

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all sorts of mathematical problems by 'em. And from the room inside that Cheops they can look up through a crack runs all the way up through, and see the North Star, any time of the day. That wasn't left that way just by accident. They don't know to this day what method they used in buildin' the pyramids, how they got them heavy stones up. It was wonderful, wonderful. Note Local legend.

"And just think of all the gold and other precious metal that's been buried and hidden away where it'll never be found. I was readin' the other day where they got some kind of an electrical device perfected they hope they'll be able to find buried treasure with. Maybe some right in this town.

"Come to think of it, they used to be a story about Hen Blakeslee havin' gold buried somewheres around here. Hen lived in that house of Harper's right on Main Street. He was a forty-niner, went out there durin' the gold rush and come back. He brought back a pair of snow shoes--two pair, in fact-- and a lot of other stuff from the west. His son was Marvin and Marvin's boy Cliff and me used to play together when we was kids. I remember goin' up in that attic and gettin' them old snow shoes and tryin' to walk on the snow with 'em, me and Cliff.

"Story was that Hen had gold buried somewheres up around the Gaskins and that he'd go up there every once in a while and dig some up. Now, I heard it, as I say, but hell, I never put no stock in it.

"Cliff Blakeslee was born in sixty one, same's me. We was 3 "war babies." He went out to Texas in the eighties and never was heard of since. His mother was Ella Ruel, and she had a sister married old Uncle Ev Smith. Uncle Ev was a peculiar old feller and a regular baked and boiled in Democrat.

"There was a German in town them days named Lucas Heitzman. He was a black German, black hair and black whiskers, and he was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican. Old

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Uncle Ev met him one election day goin' to the polls, and he says to him, 'What's your politiker Lucas?' Lucas says 'Shust so black as I look.'

"He was a great pal of Walt Thomas, Lucas was. Of course Lucas used to have a lot of homemade wine, and that might have been one reason why he was popular. They took him fishin' one time, Walt Thomas and a few other fellers, and Walt tied an old codfish skin on the end of his line. I wish I could remember what Lucas said when he pulled it in, that was the funny part of the story. Another time they went to New York, and Walt sent Lucas' wife a telegram, readin', 'Everybody drunk but Lucas.' She read it and she says, 'Yah, he was damn liar. Lucas drunk, everybody else sober.'

"Well that's kind of gettin' away from Hen Blakeslee and the buried gold ain't it? If they ever get that treasure-findin' machine perfected, you borry it and go up there in the Gaskins and look for Hen's gold. But don't be surprised if you don't find none.

"But I'd like to know the history of the Gaskins better'n I do." (A huge pile of rocks tumbled into a heap as if by a giant hand back in the hills of our town.) "I know there was somebody by that name livin' over there once, my father told mes me something about 4 it, but it ain't clear in my mind any more.

"There was some kind of a clearin' at the foot of them rocks, and there was a house or a cabin there. You know how weeds and brush grow over a place. If somebody was to dig around there they'd prob'ly find the foundation stones of that old house. And maybe a bit of buried treasure there, who knows? Note [?]

"Speakin' of that treasure-findin' machine makes me think of the dingus Harry Blakeslee uses to find water pipes. He puts a buzzer on the pipe inside the house and a pair of earphones on himself and holds the wires in his hands somethin' like these water finders do. Then he walks up and down outside the house till he locates the pipe, I've tried it myself, and it works every time. You walk back and forth and you can get the vibration of the buzzer right over the pipe. Walk a little way forward and it gets faint, walk backward

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and it gets louder. Finally you've got it, dead center. Harry located every pipe he ever looked for with that thing. Only time he ever went wrong he struck the gas pipe up at Etheridge's one day.

"Hell, I'm talkin' a lot of damn nonsense. You don't want to listen to this stuff, do you. A man's mind is a funny thing. I heard a good explanation of it one time. Your mind is like a cupboard, with a lot of small compartments. You go on storin' things away in it all through the years of your life, and when the time comes you want to use any of it, you open up the cupboard, and find the compartment, you might say, and there it is. But I'm afriad afraid some of my compartments are full of a lot of useless stuff.

"You write it down anyway, boy. Some of it might be worth 5 somethin'. Some of it was passed on to me by my father and was passed on to him by his father and so on. Ought to be preserved somehow.

"You goin'? I got to go up town myself, if I want anything for supper. You wait till I tend to the fire, and get my coat and I'll give you a ride up." _____